Iris Iraheta

Professor Kingsley

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PeTA: Their Journey to End Animal Cruelty

Many people aren’t aware of the amount of animal cruelty in today’s society, or just simply try to ignore it. The PeTA, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, corporation makes the world aware of the cruelty among animals and are truly dedicated to make a change in every animal lives. Among numerous successful cases, which include undercover investigations (videos, photographs, and even interviews), they have won justice to those animals who were being abused. Little by little and with a lot of support, PeTA is becoming more and more successful with their goal to end animal cruelty. Even well known celebrities have joined PeTA’s team which include, Pamela Anderson, Sir Paul McCarthy, Steve-O, and many more.

***“PeTA believes that animals have rights and deserve to have their best interests taken into consideration, regardless of whether they are useful to humans. Like you, they are capable of suffering and have an interest in leading lives; therefore, they are not ours to use—for food, clothing, entertainment, experimentation, or any other reasons”[[1]](#footnote-2)***

PeTA was founded in 1980 by Ingrid Newkirk and Alex Pacheco. They are a nonprofit corporation with about 2 million members and supporters[[2]](#footnote-3) who are now affiliated with Germany, United Kingdom, India, the Netherlands, and Asia-Pacific Region. PeTA operates on the principle that “animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, or use for entertainment”. Their corporation focuses on four major issues which are fur farming, animal testing, animals in entertainment and factory farming. Other issues include dog fighting, consumption of meat, fishing, killing of pest (mice, etc.), and many others. They focus a great amount on animal welfare and protection issues and are very dedicated to make a long term change in animal’s lives.

 The **Silver Spring monkeys**’ case[[3]](#footnote-4) was the first PeTA’s major undercover case in 1980. PeTA’s founders, Ingrid and Alex, both went undercover and conducted an investigation in the summer of 1981 inside a research laboratory at the Institute of Behavioral research in Silver Spring, Maryland. In this investigation, they found that the researcher/psychologist, Dr. Edward Taub, had cut seventeen macaque monkeys afferent ganglia, which applies sensation to the brain from their arms and legs, this process is called “deafferentation”.[[4]](#footnote-5) The used restraint, electric shock, and withheld their food to force them to use the limbs they could not even feel. The research led part to the development of the concept of neuroplasticity and a new physical therapy for stroke victims called constraint-induced movement therapy. With the investigation Alex led at night, he collected photographs that showed the monkeys living in unacceptable living conditions; this evidence was given to the police. The police later raided the Institute and removed all the monkeys. Taub was charged with 119 counts of animal cruelty, and convicted on six counts.[[5]](#footnote-6) PeTA was the first animal testing case to reach the Supreme Court. With this case they introduced an amendment to the Animal Welfare Act in 1985, to secure that researcher do not cause unnecessary suffering to laboratory animals.

Unfortunately, after being examined by veterinarians the monkeys were in fact suffering immensely and the veterinarians highly recommended that the animals be euthanized. PeTA tried to fight for the animal lives but ultimately it was unsuccessful. The seventeen monkeys eventually either died naturally, were still studied, euthanized, or even dissected by the National Institute of Health, who by the way funded Taub’s research with the animals.

 PeTA is definitely well known for their daring, eye opening, hard hitting, and controversial ads. Many animal loving and caring celebrities, including Pamela Anderson, Alicia Silverstone, Eva Mendes, and recently Danity Kane, all appear in PeTA’s anti-fur ad, “I’d Rather Go Naked than Wear Fur”. Other ads include “Here’s the Rest of Your Fur Coat”, in which models are holding dead animals without their coat, and the “Lettuce Ladies”, which photographed women who looked as they were wearing bikinis made out of lettuce leaves. Each ad promotes a significant message whether it’s encouraging vegan diet or ending animal killing for clothing. Although many people claimed that these ads were not “much different than blackmail”[[6]](#footnote-7), I love them because they aren’t scared to show the truth to the public eye. People who take the ads offensive, I believe are those who are scared to see or hear the truth. Another interesting ad was the “Boycott the Circus” one. They wanted to promote the boycott of circuses that use animals in what activist Dick Gregory called “modern-day slavery”[[7]](#footnote-8).

The most heart breaking video[[8]](#footnote-9) taken by an undercover PeTA member I seen was one in which elephants from **Carson & Barnes Circus** were shown being beaten and tortured with electric pods and bull hooks. You could hear the elephants screaming and yelling from their pain, while the trainer, Frisco, yells “make ‘em scream… sometimes you have to use both hands and give it all you got”. He continued by yelling “Tear that foot off! Tear it off! Make ‘em scream!”. Frisco tell another trainer “right here in the barn. You can’t do it on the road. I’m not going to touch her in front of a thousand people”. This video shows the reality of the brutal and intense training the animals go through just for our entertainment. Animals aren’t born to be able to know how to ride bicycles or dance or do some daring acts just for our entertainment. PeTA promotes the ban of “electric pods, bull hooks, and any other devices commonly used to inflict pain on elephants”.

Many people have compared humans who abuse animals as “modern day Nazis”[[9]](#footnote-10). I admire the hard work PeTA does to provide us evidence and knowledge of what is hidden from us in regard of animal cruelty. They are very committed on making a change regardless whether they get judged or critized or what they do. They always overcome obstacles to save many animals. I was not aware of the mistreatment animals went through in farms and circuses and I thank PeTA for making me aware of these unnecessary abuse animals receive just to please us. I have always been a huge animal lover and can’t bare to see animals go through all that pain and agony just to feed us, entertain us, and even get killed for a fur coat. It’s not worth killing something precious for things like that. That’s why I am a huge fan and supporter of PeTA and all their hard work they do to save animals.

1. (<http://www.peta.org/about/index.asp>) Retrieved Oct. 21, 2008 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. (<http://www.peta.org/about/index.asp>) Retrieved Oct. 21, 2008 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Newkirk, Ingrid. *Free the Animals*. Lantern Books,2000. ISBN 1-930051-22-0 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. www.animal-rights-library.com/texts-m/pacheco01.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. www.animal-rights-library.com/texts-m/pacheco01.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Sydney Morning Herald Article on PETA wool campaign (http://www.smh.com.au/news/National/Pulling-the-wool/2005/01/29/1106850160300.html [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Dick Gregory Takes on KFC” (http://www.kentuckyfriedcruelty.com/gregory.asp) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Circuses.com [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. “Eternal Treblinka” (http://www.peta.org/living/at-spring2002/treblinka) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)